

Examples of Controversial Pardons by Previous Presidents

Prepared by Minority Staff
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives

Former President Bush

- **Armand Hammer**. In 1989, President Bush pardoned Armand Hammer, former head of Occidental Petroleum. Shortly before the pardons, Mr. Hammer reportedly had contributed over \$100,000 to the Republican Party and \$100,000 to the Bush-Quayle Inaugural Committee. Mr. Hammer's attorney Bruce Kauffman, a Philadelphia attorney and Republican activist, was well-known to President Bush's then-Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, who appointed Mr. Kauffman to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. L.A. Times, *Hammer Pardon Turned On the Issue of Innocence* (Aug. 28, 1989); Newsday, *Inaugural Committee Lists \$100,000 Lenders* (Jan. 19, 1989); Salon, *The Bush Pardons* (Feb. 27, 2001).
- **Orlando Bosch**. In 1990, the Bush Justice Department granted a parole to Orlando Bosch after being lobbied by Jeb Bush, the son of the President. Mr. Bosch was an anti-Castro activist who was suspected of dozens of bombings, as well as the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner which killed 73 civilians aboard. New York Times, *Cuban Linked to Terror Bombings Is Freed By Government in Miami* (July 18, 1990); New York Times, *Bomber Away?* (July 22, 1990); Salon, *The Bush Pardons* (Feb. 27, 2001).
- **Aslam Adam**. On January 18, 1993, two days before leaving office, President Bush pardoned Aslam Adam, a Pakistani drug trafficker who had served eight years of a 55-year sentence in federal prison in North Carolina. Mr. Adam was convicted of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute \$1 million worth of heroin. President Bush did not respond to requests from the media for an explanation of the reasons behind this pardon. The assistant U.S. attorney who prosecuted Adam, Ken Andresen, stated, "This move by President Bush as he was on the verge of leaving office strikes me as exceedingly peculiar, given his strong rhetoric regarding his efforts to fight crime in general and drugs in particular." Rolling Stone, *George Bush's Heroin Connection* (Oct. 6, 1994); Houston Chronicle, *Freeing of Drug Smuggler Baffles Legal Authorities* (Mar. 38, 1993); Associated Press, *Prosecutor Attempted to Block Pardon* (Jan. 29, 1993).
- **Caspar Weinberger**. On December 24, 1992, President Bush pardoned Caspar Weinberger and five other individuals involved in the Iran-Contra scandal. This action cut off legal proceedings that had commenced against Mr. Weinberger as a result of Independent Counsel Lawrence Walsh's investigation of the Iran-Contra matter. Independent Counsel Walsh harshly criticized the pardon. He called it "terrible" and "grossly wrong." He also said, "The Iran-Contra coverup . . . has now been completed

with the pardon of Caspar Weinberger.” James N. Jorgensen, *Federal Executive Clemency Power: The President’s Prerogative To Escape Accountability*, 27 U. Rich. L. Rev. 345 (Winter 1993); Baltimore Sun, *Walsh Says Bush Pardons Validate Findings of Probe* (Dec. 28, 1992).

Former President Reagan

- **George Steinbrenner**. In 1989, President Reagan pardoned George Steinbrenner, principal owner of the New York Yankees baseball franchise and a major Republican benefactor. Although Mr. Steinbrenner had pleaded guilty to charges of conspiring to violate federal election laws to President Nixon’s 1972 re-election campaign, the main Watergate prosecutors on the case were never consulted about the pardon. Mr. Steinbrenner was represented by two prominent Republican lawyers, former Attorney General William Saxbe and T. Timothy Ryan, Jr., the Labor Department solicitor during President Reagan’s first term. Wall Street Journal, *Up For a Pardon, George Steinbrenner Defeated the Odds* (Feb. 3, 1999).
- **Gilbert L. Dozier**. In 1984, President Reagan commuted the sentence of former Louisiana agriculture commissioner, Gilbert L. Dozier. Mr. Dozier was convicted in 1980 of demanding \$329,000 in campaign contributions from farmers and industry officials in exchange for permits issued by his department. The commutation was granted over the objections of the sentencing judge and the U.S. attorney in charge of the case. One of Mr. Dozier’s lobbyists was former Reagan White House aide Lyn Nofziger, who met with Associate Attorney General D. Lowell Jensen as well as White House officials to press the commutation. Washington Post, *Recent Commutation By Reagan Stirs Controversy in Louisiana* (July 27, 1984).